

Siting a New South County Recycling and Transfer Station

To Replace the Algona Transfer Station



King County

Department of
Natural Resources and Parks
Solid Waste Division

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the purpose of a transfer station?

A transfer station is an intermediary site where many small loads of garbage and recyclables are consolidated into fewer larger loads before being transported to a disposal site or to processing facilities. Garbage and recyclables are brought to transfer stations by commercial garbage haulers and by the public. In King County, garbage is transported from transfer stations to the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill in Maple Valley. Recyclable materials are then transported to processing facilities throughout the region. King County operates eight transfer stations and two drop box facilities that are geographically dispersed throughout the county and provide convenient access for the communities they serve.

2. How was it decided that a new recycling & transfer station was needed?

In 2007, the King County Council adopted the *Solid Waste Transfer and Waste Management Plan*. That Plan documents the need for new transfer stations in King County to replace outdated and inefficient stations such as Algona. The Plan was the result of work done by an advisory committee comprising representatives from cities that are part of the County's solid waste management system. After evaluating the County's transfer station system the advisory group came up with the following recommendation: "Modernize the transfer system, including the addition of waste compactors, to accommodate a growing population and industry changes and to provide efficient and cost-effective services to customers."

3. Why does the Algona Transfer Station need to be replaced?

The Algona Transfer Station was built in the mid-1960s and lacks many key features of a new, modern recycling and solid waste facility. A new south county facility would provide the following features:

- Room to offer recycling services, such as yard waste, wood, appliances and scrap metal
- Room to install trash compactors to accurately and efficiently load the collected garbage, thereby reducing the number of trucks hauling garbage from the recycling and transfer station to the landfill by as much as 30 percent
- Adequate space for vehicles to line up on-site
- Space to store (south county area) waste in the event of a major regional disaster
- An enclosed transfer building, which contains noise, odor and dust

The new facility would serve residents and businesses in and around the cities of Algona, Auburn, Federal Way and Pacific

4. Why not replace the Algona Transfer Station on the existing site?

The existing site is less than 5 acres and is too small to accommodate a modern transfer station. A larger site would be able to include customer requested recycling services (such as yard waste, wood, appliances and scrap metal), trash compactors that will increase the efficiency of loads transported off site, and adequate space for vehicles to line up on-site.

5. Did King County already buy property in Algona to locate a new station?

In 2012, the Solid Waste Division became aware of a property for sale next to the Algona Transfer Station (35101 West Valley Hwy. S.) that might be a good location for a new transfer station. The division purchased the property to preserve it as an option for transfer station development. That property has been subject to the same site selection process and will be subject to the same environmental review as other potential sites.

6. Why are you looking at other properties if you already bought one?

The King County Code and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) require that more than one alternative be considered and evaluated in the siting of this planned solid waste facility. The property that was purchased was for sale. It looked good based on a preliminary review, but a more suitable property might be available elsewhere.

The Solid Waste Division has purchased property in the past to preserve an option to develop a new station in other parts of the county and ended up not using the property for that purpose, but was used for other income producing activities. The County purchases real estate parcels, right of way and easements to support county capital improvement projects and operations. When a property is no longer needed, the County will sell it.

7. Why don't you just use the new Bow Lake facility in Tukwila and not build a new south county station?

The existing Algona Transfer Station serves the communities of Algona, Auburn, Federal Way and Pacific. It is reachable within 30 minutes for 90 percent of users within those communities, which helps keep collection costs down due to shorter haul times by garbage haulers. Closing the Algona station and diverting all customers to the Bow Lake facility, would increase drive times for all customers, including commercial garbage haulers. That would very likely result in higher collection costs for south county residents and businesses. It would also increase customer wait times at the Bow Lake facility. Also, the Bow Lake facility was not designed to accommodate the volume of solid waste from south King County.

8. How much will the new station cost and who will pay for it?

The total project budget is approximately \$81 million. This includes property acquisition, environmental review, site development, permitting, design, and construction for a facility that is expected to last about 50 years.

All King County residents and business (excluding those in Seattle and Milton) that generate garbage pay for facility improvements through their monthly garbage bills and fees when they use a County transfer station. Part of those fees pay for long-term bonds that cover the costs to upgrade or build facilities. Property taxes will not be used to pay for the cost of building or maintaining this new facility.

9. Will my disposal fees go up to pay for the new facility?

Yes, disposal fees will increase to pay for the cost of this new facility. To pay for this facility over the next 16 years, the projected monthly cost for the average single family household would range from five cents a month to 40 cents per month.

10. Will traffic increase in the area where the new station is built?

It depends on where the new station is located. If the new transfer station is located adjacent to the existing Algona Transfer Station, traffic in the area is not expected to increase more than the existing traffic level.

If the new transfer station is located in a different part of south King County, traffic in that area would be expected to increase. Traffic impacts will be evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement to be prepared by King County.

The number of vehicles using a new facility is anticipated to grow only as the population grows. The number of County transfer trucks entering and leaving a new facility is actually expected to decrease because the installation of compactors would result in more efficient loads thereby reducing the number of transfer truck trips.

11. Will King County pay for repairs to local roadways due to transfer station traffic?

State law (RCW 36.58.080) allows cities to charge counties to make repairs to mitigate impacts directly attributable to a solid waste facility. A city must establish that the charges are reasonably necessary to mitigate the impacts and the revenue generated from the charges must be used only to mitigate the impacts. This option is available to cities if road conditions are directly attributable to solid waste facility traffic.

12. How will a transfer station affect surrounding property values?

A new transfer station would need to be in an area where the zoning permits such a facility as an allowable or conditional use. An enclosed new transfer station resembles a warehouse where materials are being reassembled and made ready for shipments to other places. So to the extent that a warehouse in an appropriately zoned area has an impact on surrounding property values, the same could be said for a new transfer station. In addition, a transfer station must comply with local, state and federal environmental requirements which ensure minimal impacts on surrounding areas. New facilities are designed to mitigate environmental and operational impacts on the community.

13. How did you assess potential sites for the new station?

Sites were evaluated based on three types of criteria:

- **Pass/Fail** – these criteria are based on the mission, vision and values of King County and establish minimum standards that must be met to qualify for further consideration.
- **Functional** – these criteria provide guidance to determine the feasibility of potential sites from optimal engineering, operating and transportation conditions.
- **Community** – these criteria consider local, social and cultural factors that could impact the surrounding community

Members of a Siting Advisory Committee worked with King County to develop the Community criteria. Members included representatives from the cities of Algona and Federal Way, area residents, school districts, chambers of commerce, environmental and neighborhood groups, and transfer station users. The role of the advisory committee is to identify community concerns and impacts, develop community criteria to evaluate potential sites, create public awareness of the project, provide input on outreach materials, and express opinions and preferences on the siting process.

Using criteria developed by the county and the Siting Advisory Committee, and considering comments from the advisory committee and the public in a series of meetings and as a result of the initial State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) scoping comment period, the number of potential sites was narrowed from more than 100, to three. (See response to Question 14 below for more information.)

14. What sites are under consideration for the new station?

At this time, three sites are under consideration for the location of a new station:

- 901 C St. SW, Auburn
- 35101 West Valley Highway S., Algona
- 28721 West Valley Highway S., Auburn*

*In late 2012, the City of Auburn provided the Solid Waste Division information about this 15-acre site that had previously been considered and rejected during the initial site screening process because it did not meet a key functional criterion, “site contains a manageable amount of critical areas.” The original information available to the Division indicated that approximately 12 acres of this 15-acre site were wetlands, which made the site unsuitable for development of a transfer station. The City of Auburn has provided the Division with new information indicating that a much smaller percentage of the site may qualify as wetlands. The information concerning wetlands will continue to be evaluated as the EIS is developed, including consultation with the appropriate regulatory agencies.

15. Will the public get a say in where the new facility is located?

Yes, public involvement is essential to identifying the best site for a new facility. One way to provide input is to attend public meetings scheduled for the project or to provide online comments. To learn more, contact the Solid Waste Division at 206-296-4466, TTY Relay: 711 or visit <http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/facilities/algona/index.asp>

16. Is King County going to look at the environmental impacts of this project?

Yes. In accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), the King County Solid Waste Division issued a *Determination of Significance* on October 30, 2012. The County will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will evaluate the potential impacts associated with three “Action Alternatives” (build a new recycling and transfer station on one of the three potential sites under consideration) and a “No Action” alternative (retain the existing Algona Transfer Station until the end of its functional life.)

17. When will the EIS be completed and a site decision made?

The EIS is expected to be completed and a siting decision made in mid-2014.

18. Who decides which site is selected?

A recommendation of a preferred site will be made by the Solid Waste Division. The final site decision will be made by the King County Executive after the environmental review process has been completed.

19. When would construction start?

Construction would start in 2016 and the new facility would open in 2018.

20. How can I stay informed about this project? Visit the project website <http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/facilities/algona/index.asp> and sign up for updates.

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